

## These notes are for:

- Secondary
- Years 9 - 12
- 13+ years

## Key Learning Areas:

- English
- History

## Example of:

- Print Text
- Science Fiction
- Young Adult Fiction

## Experience of:

- Manipulation and control
- Power and oppression
- Prejudice and slavery
- Love and loyalty
- Terrorism
- Identity
- Moral ambiguity
- Feminism
- Information saturation

## Values addressed:

- Freedom
- Equality
- Tolerance
- Respect

## Suggested resources:

- Multiple copies of *The Ask and the Answer*
- Pre-reading of *The Knife of Never Letting Go*
- Internet access
- Writing journal

### FROM THE COSTA CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARD JUDGES:

"From the first word, we were gripped by this dazzlingly-imagined, morally complex, compulsively-plotted tale. We are convinced that this is a major achievement in the making."

\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of Walker Books.

Walker Books Australia      Ph +61 2 9517 9577  
 Locked Bag 22                      Fax +61 2 9517 9997  
 Newtown, NSW, 2042

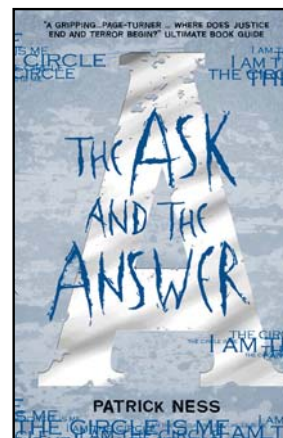
For enquiries please contact Melissa Hamilton:  
 mhamilton@walkerbooks.com.au  
 www.walkerbooks.com.au  
 Notes © 2009 Walker Books Australia Pty. Ltd.  
 All Rights Reserved

## The Ask and the Answer - Overview

### *The Ask and the Answer* Book 2, *Chaos Walking Trilogy*

by PATRICK NESS

*The Ask and the Answer, Book 2*  
*Chaos Walking Trilogy* (pbk)  
 ISBN: 9781406327496  
 ARRP: \$24.95  
 NZRRP: \$27.99  
 No. of Pages: 536  
 December 2009



## Outline:

Todd has carried a desperately wounded Viola the last few feet into Haven and right into the hands of their worst enemy, Mayor Prentiss. In exchange for Viola's safety, Todd is forced to work with the Mayor in creating a new society for the settlers to come, one based on bringing an ominous-sounding order to the chaos of New Prentisstown. But what secrets are hiding just outside of town? And who are the mysterious Answer?

At the end of Book One of the *Chaos Walking* trilogy we left a badly wounded Viola and Todd in the hands of Mayor Prentiss, now President Prentiss. The town of Haven has surrendered to him and Viola is sent to a House of Healing. One of President Prentiss' first actions is to jail Todd, separate the men and women and enslave the Spackle.

Patrick Ness has deepened the complexity and moral ambiguity in his second book of the *Chaos Walking* trilogy. The challenges to the reader and the characters are immense, as the ethical dilemmas of terror and justice take hold. Readers 14+ will devour this confronting and gripping tale of power and control.

Awards for *The Ask and the Answer*:

Winner – Costa Children's Book Award 2009, Shortlisted – Booktrust Teenage Prize 2009

## Author Information:

Patrick Ness was born in 1971 on an army base called Fort Belvoir, near Alexandria, Virginia, in the United States. He studied English Literature at the University of Southern California and worked as a corporate writer at a cable company in Los Angeles. He moved to London in 1999 and taught Creative Writing at Oxford University for three years. He has published two books for adults, *The Crash of Hennington* and a short story collection called *Topics About Which I Know Nothing*. He writes 1000 words a day, *The Knife of Never Letting Go* was 112,900 words long and took about seven months to get to first draft.

## Notes prepared by Deb McPherson:

Deb McPherson has taught English in NSW secondary schools for twenty-eight years. She worked as part of the committee for selecting texts for the Higher School Certificate for over fifteen years. She was the Senior Curriculum Officer, English, at the Board of Studies from 2001-2002 when she worked on the development of the 2002 English Years 7-10 Syllabus. She was the Manager of English for the NSW Department of Education and Training from 2003-2006. She is the author of four anthologies of Australian non fiction and has co-authored a collection of recommended texts for the 7-12 English classroom and a HSC English guide.

## How to use these notes:

To appeal to a broader curriculum, these teachers' notes have been categorised into the areas Viewing, Reading and Writing, and Listening and Speaking. Particular themes of interest have also been explored. These activities may appeal to a broad age range but are aimed at years 9 - 12. Recommended websites within these notes may not have content that is age appropriate. Please use at your own discretion.



## Before reading the *The Ask and the Answer*:

- Before reading the text it would be useful to conduct some research into the invasion and colonisation of indigenous races that often resulted in exploitation and oppression. The Australian Aboriginal experience is one example. The Native American peoples, Inuit and the indigenous people of Africa are others. In many cases the indigenous resistance to invasion was documented by the invaders, showing only their perspective.

Select one indigenous culture and using the internet and your school or local library research the nature and course of their resistance to invasion. Try to find commentary and evidence from both sides of the conflict. The following websites may be of assistance.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Population\\_history\\_of\\_American\\_indigenous\\_peoples](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Population_history_of_American_indigenous_peoples)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish\\_conquest\\_of\\_the\\_Aztec\\_Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_conquest_of_the_Aztec_Empire)

[http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/ab\\_studies/glossary/2236/glossary2.htm](http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/ab_studies/glossary/2236/glossary2.htm)

<http://www.nativevillage.org/Libraries/European%20Invasion.htm>

## Speaking & Listening questions for *The Ask and the Answer*:

### • ORATORY

The Mayor of Prentisstown is given to making speeches. He uses his powers of oratory to persuade and cajole, to intimidate and dominate. Carefully read his speech on pages 39-41 and then consider the following aspects of oratory and grade him on his effectiveness.

**Passion:** Does the President speak passionately and emotionally to show how committed he is?

**Rhetorical devices:** Does the President use rhetorical devices ( e.g. hyperbole, repetition, rhetorical questions) to persuade people to his point of view?

**Authority:** Does the President speak with confidence and authority, does he seem to be knowledgeable and expert about his subject?

**Delivery:** Does the President demonstrate variation in his volume, intonation and use pause for dramatic effect?

**Subject significance:** Is the President speaking about concerns, issues or topics that have high significance for his audience?

Would you assess the President as an orator or a demagogue and a propagandist? Discuss.

### • SPEAKING BACK

When a cure is found for the Noise it becomes a precious commodity, a powerful weapon for the Mayor to use to control his followers. The cure was tested on the Spackle but as the Noise was the way they exchanged ideas the cure blocked their communication with each other. Corinne says 'It's like we cut out their tongues.' (p100). The cure had the additional effect of making the Spackle docile and 'better slaves'.

Imagine you are a Spackle slave and if you could speak, what would you say to the settlers who invaded your world and took away your freedom and your ability to communicate? Script your speech. You could look at the responses of other indigenous peoples such as the speech by Michael Dodson, (then) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner at the H.C. (Nugget) Coombs Northern Australia Inaugural Lecture in Darwin, on 5 September 1996 called *Assimilation versus self-determination: No contest*, at:

[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/speeches/social\\_justice/assimilation\\_vs\\_selfdetermination.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/speeches/social_justice/assimilation_vs_selfdetermination.html)

### • TAKING SIDES

The Ask and The Answer groups are two different sides in a rapidly developing civil war. Viola is reluctantly aligned with The Answer while Todd appears to acquiesce with some of the actions of The Ask yet both main characters are ambivalent about the methods used and desperately want to find each other and a solution to the violence and inequality of the New World.

Divide the class into small groups (each group will represent either The Ask, The Answer, Todd or Viola) and, after a close examination of the relevant sections of the text, articulate what you stand for, your goals and the methods you are prepared to use to attain these goals. For example The Ask group should have to explain the murder of the Spackle slaves. Each group would be expected to comment on the justifications of the other groups.

## Reading & Writing questions for *The Ask and the Answer*:

- QUOTATION**

Patrick Ness placed a quotation from Friedrich Nietzsche at the start of *The Ask and the Answer*.

“Battle not with monsters  
lest you become a monster  
and if you gaze into the abyss  
the abyss gazes into you.”

This quotation highlights the challenges facing Todd and Viola (and readers) as they struggle to deal with the conflict and confusion of their situations. What is the right thing to do and who is right are becoming more difficult to decide. This moral ambiguity is at the heart of Ness' book. Ethical dilemmas abound and there are no easy answers. With a partner list some of the ethical dilemmas Todd and Viola face and discuss your response to their actions. For example Todd's branding of the Spackle slaves, Viola's involvement of Maddy or Todd's growing bond with Davy Prentiss.

- TWO NARRATORS**

Both Todd and Viola tell the story in Book Two of *Chaos Walking*. In Book One we only saw events from Todd's perspective, now the reader experiences a split narration with two first person narratives, each with their distinctive viewpoints. Construct a chart that shows the key events as seen by both narrators. Indicate when they are describing the same events. An example table, with starting entries has been supplied below.

Todd	Key events	Viola
Todd	Todd's interrogation by Mayor Prentiss	
Todd	Todd's imprisonment with Mayor Ledger	

- PREDICTION**

Using your knowledge of the Spackle and your imagination try to predict the nature and course of their resistance. Their fight back first appears at the end of *The Ask and the Answer* and will unfold in Book Three of *Chaos Walking – Monsters of Men* that will be published in May 2010.

- JOURNAL WRITING**

Todd's mother left him a journal that he does not have the skills to read. Davy Prentiss taunts Todd with his possession of this book although he later returns it. Imagine you are Todd and are literate, what would you write in your own journal about the events of the last few months such as; your interrogation, your growing bond with Davy, your love for Viola, your branding of the slaves, your hatred of the Mayor and your acquiescence in his plans and your realisation that he killed the Spackle slaves. Try to capture Todd's bewilderment, anger and confusion over these events.

- RESEARCH ON EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN**

The men of Prentisstown could not bear that women could hear their thoughts and they could not hear what the women were thinking. Their solution is gender genocide. Women have struggled throughout history to gain equality in society and before the law. Viola represents a society that promotes equality. In contrast one of the first acts of Mayor Prentiss in Haven was to separate the women and men, it was this action that sent Mistress Coyle's resistance movement into operation. In small groups research the struggle for equal rights for women in Australia, the United States of America and Great Britain, and compare your results. Find out when women could own property, attend university, vote in elections, enter parliament, practice law or medicine and other milestones on the way to equality. You may be surprised by the results of your research. The following websites will give you a starting point:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_feminism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_feminism)  
<http://civilliberty.about.com/od/gendersexuality/tp/History-of-Feminism.htm>

- MANIPULATING THE NEWS**

The way we see and interpret events is influenced by our own background and perspective. The media reports news and opinion. Reporters are expected to report the facts impartially while opinion pieces may reflect their writers' own biases. Select one key incident from *The Ask and the Answer* and construct two different newspaper articles that reach different conclusions about that incident. For example the Mayor and Mistress Coyle could report the branding of the Spackle in different ways. Translate your key event into two different front-page newspaper reports. Remember to cover WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and HOW in your report. Design graphics or photos to accompany your article.

## Viewing questions for *The Ask and the Answer*:

- VISUALISATION

As you read *The Ask and the Answer* you gain an impression of the physical and mental attributes of the indigenous people, the Spackle, from the descriptive words and actions Ness uses. However, each reader brings their own background experiences with them to the text and may form a slightly different image of this indigenous race. Using information from the text and your own imagination draw and describe 1017; the Spackle who appeared to resist, the Spackle Todd allowed to escape, the Spackle who is undoubtedly returning with the army marching on New Prentissown.

- FILM AND BOOK REVIEW

A related text for *The Ask and the Answer* is *District 9* (2009) a mockumentary about an alien race stranded in South Africa who are kept segregated from humanity and derogatorily referred to as "Prawns". The parallels with the Apartheid era are clearly drawn and the intimidation and brutality of the mercenary force policing the "Prawns" matches the behaviour and attitudes of the Mayor's army. Watch this film and note the similarities and differences with *The Ask and the Answer*. You could write a review of *District 9* for posting on the Internet Movie Database (IMDB) that draws on your knowledge of both texts. Go to the title page on *District 9* at:

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1136608/>

and select 'user review', scroll to the end of the first page and click on 'add another review'. You will be invited to register and then there are guidelines to follow.

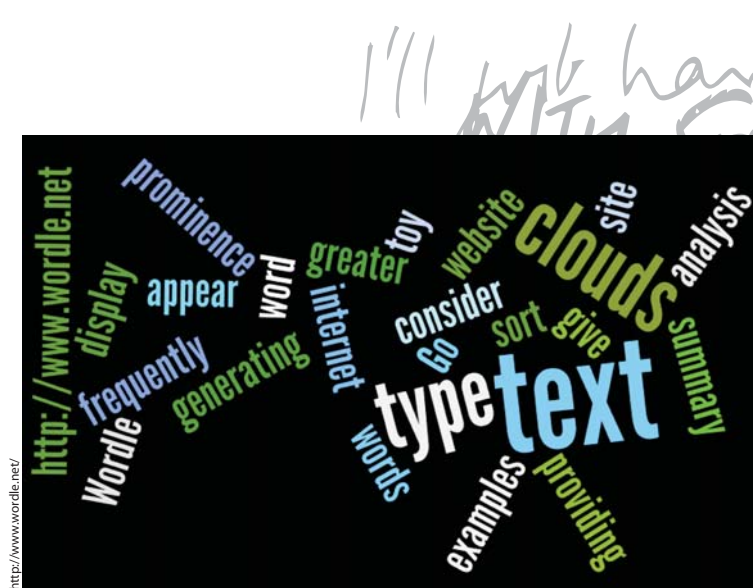
- CREATE A WORDLE FOR THE ASK AND THE ANSWER

"Wordle" is an internet toy for generating "word clouds" from text that you type into the site at:

<http://www.wordle.net/>

The clouds give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the text you type in, providing a sort of summary or analysis of the text. Go to the website and consider some of the examples on display. Then consider what words would best describe your response to *The Ask and the Answer*. Type your most important words more frequently into the wordle template. You could also create wordles for the major characters such as Todd, Viola, Mayor Prentiss and Mistress Coyle.

You can vary your clouds with different fonts, layouts and color schemes. In groups suggest the words you will type in and create your wordle, then capture it for display and comparison in the classroom.



## Belonging questions for *The Ask and the Answer*:

*The Ask and the Answer* could be a powerful supplementary text in the area of study 'Belonging' for the NSW HSC Standard and Advanced English courses. Maslow ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow's\\_hierarchy\\_of\\_needs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow's_hierarchy_of_needs)) describes belonging as a basic human need and we can see this in the developing bond between former enemies Davy Prentiss and Todd and in the powerful arguments of Mistress Coyle to get Viola to join her resistance. Consider the following aspects of belonging in the novel.

- Why is Mayor Prentiss so fanatical about including Todd in his community? What conditions does he set?
- Why is Mistress Coyle so eager to enlist Viola?
- Why does Corinne stand apart?
- Where does Mayor Ledger stand, to which community does he give his loyalty and why?
- What forces and conditions bring Todd and Davy Prentiss together?
- Why are the Spackle enslaved? The metal bands mark the Spackle as belonging- to what?
- Why are the women being banded and what does this represent? From what are they being excluded?
- Is Todd's partial acquiescence driven by a need to 'belong' by the complexity of his situation, by the Mayor's persistence or by a combination of factors?

## Ideas for the library:

- **DYSTOPIAN FICTION**

When the setting for a novel is an ideal world it is usually referred to as a utopia. However when the world is a nightmare one it is called a dystopia. The books and films below can generally be classified as dystopian. They describe worlds in which people battle for their existence or are manipulated and controlled by malign forces. Poverty, disease and death are prevalent. In small groups investigate the titles below on the internet through Amazon.com and IMDB and select different texts to read or view. Be prepared to review your selected film or book for the whole class and to defend your opinion by reference to the text.

## Related books:

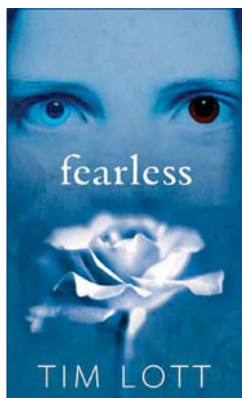
- *The Hunger Games* (2008) by Suzanne Collins
- *Feed* (2002) by M. T. Anderson
- *Invitation to the Game* (1993) by Monica Hughes
- *The Giver* (1993) by Lois Lowry
- *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) by George Orwell
- *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley

## Related films:

- *District 9* (2009)
- *Children of Men* (2006)
- *Serenity* (2005)
- *The Matrix* (series) (1999-2003)
- *Gattaca* (1997)
- *Brazil* (1985)
- *Blade Runner* (1982)
- *Logan's Run* (1976)
- *Metropolis* (1927)

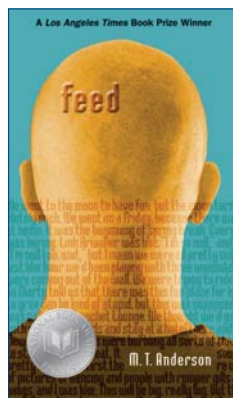


## Dystopian fiction from Walker Books



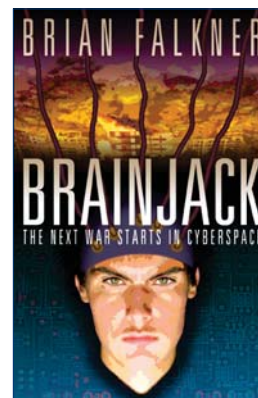
*Fearless* (pbk)  
by Tim Lott  
ISBN: 9781406308624  
ARRP: \$16.95  
NZRRP: \$19.99  
No. of Pages: 272  
July 2007  
\*Teachers' Resources available  
\*Premier's Reading Challenge  
List NSW Booklist 7-9

Told as a dystopian fairytale, *Fearless* is a model of fine writing. Its structure, plotting, themes, characterisation and voice are exemplary. Its subtle references to a futuristic society welcome readers to the genre of speculative fiction.



*Feed* (pbk)  
by M.T. Anderson  
ISBN: 9780763622596  
ARRP: \$16.95  
NZRRP: \$19.99  
No. of Pages: 320  
June 2003  
\*Honor Book – Boston Globe  
Horn Book Award  
\*Shortlisted – National Book  
Award (US)

M. T. Anderson's skillful use of satire invites readers to recognise elements of the present-day world within a sci-fi setting. Besides being a smart, savage satire, *Feed* is also a poignant story about human connection and loss that leaves an unforgettable emotional impact.



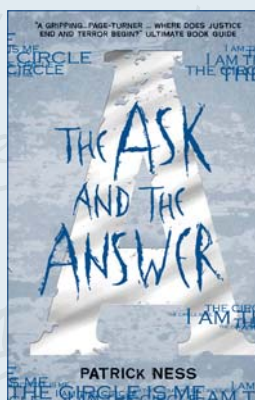
*Brainjack* (pbk)  
by Brian Falkner  
ISBN: 9781921150951  
ARRP: \$18.95  
NZRRP: \$19.99  
No. of Pages: 450  
Sept 2009  
\*Teachers' Notes Available  
\**The Tomorrow Code* short-listed for the NZ Post Book Awards 2009

A thrilling sci-fi adventure from Brian Falkner, the bestselling author of *The Tomorrow Code*. *Brainjack* explores computer technology in a scientific and philosophical way that will encourage discussion in the classroom. Topical themes of war and terrorism can also be explored with this novel.

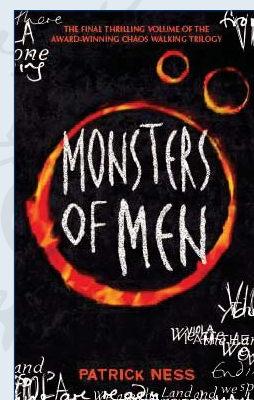
## Read them all!



*The Knife of Never Letting Go*  
*Chaos Walking Book 1* (pbk)  
ISBN: 9781406326314  
ARRP: \$24.95  
NZRRP: \$27.99  
No. of Pages: 496  
October 2009



*The Ask and the Answer*  
*Chaos Walking Book 2* (pbk)  
ISBN: 9781406327496  
ARRP: \$24.95  
NZRRP: \$27.99  
No. of Pages: 536  
December 2009



*Monsters of Men*  
*Chaos Walking Book 3* (hbk)  
ISBN: 9781406328233  
ARRP: \$32.95  
NZRRP: \$34.99  
No. of Pages: TBC  
May 2010